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ABSTRACT

A project was developed and implemented to help correct the behavioral problems most commonly found in the kindergarten classroom in a central Florida school. Three literature-based units were produced and used by a target group of six kindergarten teachers and their students. The objectives were to increase positive behaviors in listening, decrease aggressive behaviors, and increase getting along with other students by 10%. The main strategy was the use of writer-developed stories based around each of the identified behaviors along with follow-up classroom activities. A listening teacher observational tool, editorial team survey of aggressive behaviors, and a teacher-made rating scale for getting along with others were used by the target group of teachers to measure each student's behavioral change. All of the project objectives were met. Results of the posttest showed an 82% increase in positive behaviors in listening, a 40% decrease in aggressive behaviors, and a 77% increase in positive behaviors in the area of getting along with others. (Appendixes include a needs assessment survey, a literature evaluation form, a listening teacher observational tool, an editorial team survey of aggressive behaviors, and a teacher-made rating scale for getting along with others. Contains 12 references.) (Author/TB)

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USING AUTHOR CREATED LITERATURE TO CORRECT DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS IN THE KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM

by

Debora Wallace- Hendrick

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A Final Report submitted to the Faculty of the Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education of Nova Southeastern University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Science

The abstract of this report may be placed in the University database system for reference.

March 1995

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Abstract

Using Author Created Literature to correct Disciplinary Problems in the Kindergarten Classroom.
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Descriptors: Early Childhood Education/ Kindergarten Behavior/ Listening/ Aggressive Behaviors/ Social Skills/ Using Literature to Correct Negative Behaviors

This project was developed and implemented to help correct the behavioral problems most commonly found in the kindergarten classroom. Three literature-based units were produced and used by a target group of six kindergarten teachers and their students. The objectives were to increase positive behaviors in listening, aggressive behaviors, and getting along with other students by 10%. The main strategy was the use of writer-developed stories based around each of the identified behaviors along with follow-up classroom activities. A listening teacher observational tool, editorial team survey of aggressive behaviors, and a teacher-made rating scale for getting along with others were used by the target group of teachers to measure student's behavioral change. All of the project objectives were met. The results of the post test showed an 82% increase in positive behaviors in listening, a 40% decrease in aggressive behaviors, and a 77% increase in positive behaviors in the area of getting along with others. Appendices include a needs assessment survey, a literature evaluation form, a listening teacher observational tool, an editorial team survey of aggressive behaviors, and a teacher made rating scale for getting along with others.

Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. When it has been necessary to draw form the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give this testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of the professionals in the field and in the hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

Debora Wallace-Hendrick
student's signature

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Table of Contents

Page

Abstract....ii

Authorship Statement/Document Release....iii

Project Verification....iv

Table of Contents....v

CHAPTERS

I. Purpose....1
II. Research and Solution Strategy....8
III. Method....26
IV. Results....34
V. Recommendations....38

Reference List....39

Bibliography....41

Appendices

Appendix A: Needs Assessment Survey....43
Appendix B: Needs Assessment Survey Data Collected....45
Appendix C: Behavioral Text and Activities on Listening....47
Appendix D: Behavioral Text Activities on Aggression....49
Appendix E: Behavioral Text on Getting Along With Others..51
Appendix F: Literature Evaluation Tool....53
Appendix G: Listening Observational Evaluation Tool 55
Appendix H: Aggressive Behaviors Evaluation Survey....57
Appendix I: Getting Along With Others Rating Scale Tool....59
Appendix J: Listening Literature Components Results....61
Appendix K: Aggressive Behaviors Literature Results....63
Appendix L: Getting Along With Others Literature Results....65
Appendix M: Listening Observational Tool Results....67
Appendix N: Aggressive Behaviors Survey Results....69
Appendix O: Getting Along Rating Scale Results....71

Attachments

Behavioral Book Copies....73

CHAPTER I

Purpose

Background

The author selected three settings for the implementation of the practicum. All three sites were in the same county school district. The target district was located in the central Florida area on the east coast. The county had a wide variety of employment opportunities in areas such as agriculture, small business and industry, education, and tourism. Three target sites were chosen because of their differences in student population, and their community and location diversity.

Target school setting A was located in one of the fastest growing communities on the east side of the county. The community had a population of 38,144, and had two new elementary schools in addition to site A. With accelerated growth, the need for an additional school became evident, and a third school opened in 1994 to reduce overpopulation of the other three schools. The primary sources of income in this area were tourism and small business. This target school site had 1167 students enrolled. Of the enrollment, 81 percent of the pupils were White, 17 percent were Black, and three percent were other, e.g., Hispanic, Asian, and Indian children. The attendance rate of the site was 95 percent. The mobility rate, which demonstrated

the stability of the school's population was 38 percent, and habitual truants comprised one percent of the enrollment. Pupils who fell into these last categories may have added to the behavioral problems of the school because they were not in school long enough to learn classroom rules and regulations. The average class size in grades kindergarten through five was 27. Thirty-three percent of the students received free or reduced lunch. The school district's percentage of children on free or reduced lunch was 42 percent. The percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch may be a reflection of the economic status of the school community, and may indicate additional student educational needs. This setting did not offer Chapter I services, a federal compensatory educational program that offers supplementary assistance in reading and mathematics to students who qualify.

The second location, site B, was an inner city school in the northeastern part of the county. The population of this community was 11,146 and tourism and businesses were the primary sources of income in the area. The school site had 1271 students enrolled, and of the group, 75 percent were White, 21 percent were Black, and four percent were other students. The attendance rate was 94 percent. The student mobility rate was 38 percent, while habitual truants totaled three percent of the population. In grades kindergarten through five, the average class size was 25 students. Fifty-six percent of the students received free or reduced price lunch. This large percentage reflected

the lower socio-economic level of the student population in setting B. Setting B offered Chapter I services, and of the total student enrollment, 27 percent were a part of the program. The percentage of students involved in this program was high in number compared to the district and state percent of 15.

The last school site, setting C, was located on the west side of the county. This community had a population of 17,323, with the primary income based on small businesses and agriculture One of the oldest colleges in the state was in this community. The community also drew from a surrounding population of about 60,000, most of whom were in agriculture. Although the school was in a middle class neighborhood, a federally funded housing project for low-income families was within this school's attendance zone. The student enrollment in setting C was 1087. Of the student population, 67 percent were White, 29 percent were Black, and four percent were students of other ethnicities. During the 1993-1994 school year, 12 classes of Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) were added to the school population because of another area school's overcrowded conditions. This change was not reflected in the percentage of other students attending the school because the state had not updated the Florida School Report since the 1992-1993 school year. The attendance rate of site C was 94 percent. The student mobility rate of the school was 44 percent, which showed a highly mobile community thus presenting the school staff with the challenges of a fluctuating

population. Although mobility may have created a dilemma for the teaching staff at this target site, habitual truants did not, as the percent of truants were zero. The average class size was 26 pupils in grades kindergarten through grades five. Forty-seven percent of the student population received free or reduced lunch. This percent reflected the lower socio economic population within the school. A self-contained center for students with physical and learning exceptionalities housed 16 percent of the school's student population.

Problem Statement

During the past two years, the writer had noted a number of specific behavioral problems which hindered the process of development and learning in the writer's kindergarten children. Behaviors such as lying, fighting, or aggressive behaviors, poor relationships with others, and poor listening skills impeded children's progress in kindergarten. Negative behaviors like these, directly influenced the ability of individual children to conform to the school learning environment. The writer was aware that these behaviors, if consistently displayed, would delay the development of kindergarten level social skills. In turn, the child would be unable to learn, thus establishing a pattern of failure that could continue throughout a student's educational career. Children should develop the ability to ignore inappropriate behaviors that may influence their learning.

The writer scheduled a meeting of kindergarten teachers at site C to discuss the behavioral problems of kindergarten students that they

may also have observed. One hundred percent of the teachers at the meeting agreed that they too had serious concerns about discipline problems that occurred within the classroom.

Following this meeting, the writer listed the top misbehaviors, as indicated by the teacher and then selected the top five behaviors to list on a needs assessment survey (Appendix A :43). The writer then sent the survey to 18 kindergarten teachers in four area schools to identify the top three behavioral problems they had observed in their students. Of the eighteen surveys sent, fourteen were returned. As was seen from the data (Appendix B :45), more than 85 percent of these teachers agreed that all of the five behaviors were also problems in their classroom. Sixty-four percent of the educators noted that *listening* was a severe or constant problem, while 30 percent saw listening as a minor or intermittent problem. Forty-four percent of the teachers responding, observed that *fighting or aggressive behavior* was a severe or constant problem, while 50 percent noted it was a minor or intermittent problem. Thirty-seven percent of the teachers responding found *getting along with others* to be a constant problem, and 58 percent perceived it as a minor or intermittent problem. Only one percent of the teachers responding observed *separation from parent* to be a severe or constant problem, while 93 percent responded that it was a minor or intermittent problem. One percent of the teachers indicated that lying was a severe or constant problem, while 79 percent said it was a minor or intermittent problem. Fourteen percent

did not find the behavior to be a problem at all in the kindergarten classroom. In summary, the top three areas of concern, according to the survey were listening, aggressive behavior, and getting along with others.

Two target groups were involved in this practicum. The first group contained six kindergarten teachers at the three target sites who assisted in editorial work, implementation, and evaluation of the practicum product. The second target group was the kindergarten students in the teachers' classrooms. The four teachers at setting A had 18 to 30 years of teaching experience. They had 25 students in each of their classrooms. The numbers of boys and girls varied in each classroom, but the classroom lists were set up evenly to distribute the sexes. The total number of students in the target groups at site A was 85. The teacher at setting B had eight years of educational experience and 24 kindergarten pupils, with student genders distributed evenly in the classroom. The teacher at site C had 25 years of kindergarten teaching experience and a total of 25 students, with boys and girls evenly distributed within the classroom environment. The teachers at all three sites used the whole language model of teaching and were strongly literature-based in their teaching styles and curricular offerings within the classroom setting.

Outcome Objectives

The goal of the practicum project included four objectives which covered the areas of kindergarten concern. The proposed objectives

were as follows:

Objective number one: After twelve weeks, the writer will have developed three kindergarten literature-based behavioral teaching units as evidenced by the target group of teachers checking 100% of the components on a checklist of teaching and literature components.

Objective number two: After participation in a three-week literature program, the targeted group of kindergarten students will demonstrate 10 percent more positive behavior in listening and listening skills as evidenced by a teacher observation tool.

Objective number three: After three weeks of participation in a behavioral literature program, the targeted kindergarten students will decrease aggressive behaviors by 10 percent as validated by an editorial team survey.

Objective number four: After three weeks of implementing a literature-based behavioral modification project, the target group of kindergarten students will generate 10 percent more positive behaviors in getting along with others as measured by a teacher-made rating scale.

Chapter II

Research and Solution Strategy

The author first researched strategies related to the three behaviors chosen for the practicum. In the area of listening, Truesdale (1990), created a model of instruction which provided the early learner with the behaviors necessary for capable and competent listening. Truesdale's activities were developed through a task analysis of listening behaviors necessary for effective listening. The researcher called these essential behaviors "whole body" activities. The activities were designed to teach students what they must do in order to listen. Listening, stated Truesdale, is associated with active behaviors in contrast to passively hearing auditory information. A typical lesson plan in whole body listening was composed of four essential aspects which compare listening to the parts of the body. In the first part of the student's exercise, the educator explained the differences between hearing and listening. For example: "In order to hear, we need our ears. When we listen, we need to use much more" (p.184). Emphasis was placed on the attending behaviors that are necessary in order to listen: being still and quiet, thinking about listening, and paying attention to sounds. The children then became aware that they must

do something when they listen. Emphasis was on the active nature of listening. These active behaviors were taught using the tangible parts of the body in order to make listening a concrete, active, observable skill. Children were taught that their brain, eyes, mouth, hands, feet, and even their seat, are used in listening. Specific examples of using each part of the body to produce good listening were given. After examples were given and discussed, the whole body behaviors were reviewed, and a visual picture was drawn labeling the listening body parts. Students then discussed negative examples of listening behaviors. This discussion assisted the students in identifying and discriminating poor listening behaviors. The final aspect covered was to explain that children who listen with their whole bodies look like they are listening. Children were told that a teacher could tell who was a good listener just by looking at the students. In conclusion, Truesdale established the idea that whole body listening could be implemented in group or individual speech-language sessions or it could be presented to an entire classroom. The instruction was utilized to teach students how to listen, rather than to give practice in listening skills as had previously been done.

In the area of aggression, Weiss and Miller (1983), examined the early phases of the understanding of the causes of moderately and extremely displaced aggression. Preschool and kindergarten children, three to five years of age, viewed eight video taped episodes of

displaced aggression. The children's comprehension of this aggression was assessed by means of open-ended questions and forced-choice picture selection. By the age of five, most children had some understanding of displaced aggression: that anger can be displaced from it's intended target to other objects. Rather than focus on what young children do not know, the study focused on the rudimentary knowledge that the children do have. The author stated that component skills which are developed from ages three to five and which ultimately lead to the mature understanding of displaced behaviors were: gaining the ability to infer or label their own emotions, inferring that the child is still thinking about the instigating event, spontaneously verbalizing an explanation without the experimenter's probes, and integrating the various pieces of relevant information into a causal explanation. The researchers related that childrens' understanding of defense mechanisms is important for both conceptual and pragmatic reasons. Adults can build on the childrens' understanding of defense mechanisms to help them cope with the negative or deviant behaviors of their parents and classmates. Weiss and Miller stated that virtually all research on cognitive development has been limited to logical thinking about either physical objects and events or people. They indicated that a broader and more satisfactory account of cognitive development is necessary. In this model of cognitive development, the child has an understanding of the

irrational human behavior as well. Weiss and Miller indicated that it was important that interventions in aggressive behavior fit the developmental understandings of the child.

Jewett (1992), while agreeing with Weiss and Miller, indicated that replacing aggressive behaviors with more socially productive alternatives can benefit the child. Important techniques included helping young children label and verbalize their feelings and those of others, develop problem-solving approaches to conflicts, seek and obtain assistance when in difficulty, and notice the consequences of their aggressive actions for their victims. Adults must be consistent, supportive, and nonpunitive in their guidance, and must help the child understand the reactions of all participants and the reasons for limits. According to Jewett, this guidance will help very young children cope with aggressive behaviors. Jewett suggested classroom strategies that promote cooperative, rather than competitive undertakings. The author used dramatic play to foster techniques and reflective strategies for thinking about and discussing social interactions. These interactions empowered children with ways to get to know and trust each other and work toward true cooperative interactions. According to Jewett, early childhood educators can support the emergence of trusting and positive interpersonal strategies by encouraging the formation of play groups and regular social interactions that are supervised in a supportive manner. Children benefit from consistent

and controlled relationships in which they can build trust, understand and predict the actions of their peers, and gain faith in their ability to cope with aggressive interactions.

Much time was spent by Gronlund (1992) within the kindergarten classroom facilitating problem solving among the students in the classroom around the childrens' aggressive play. Gronlund found this type of play began innocently, either as superheros acting out Ninja Turtles, Superman, Indiana Jones, or as war play G. I. Joe . This type of play deteriorated and eventually turned into outright aggressive acts and injury. Most of the kicking and karate chopping were an attempt at "fake fighting." The amount of skill necessary for controlling such gross-motor movements was not well developed in kindergartners so some students were harmed as a result of aggressive acts. Through observation, the author noted that play seemed to reflect an intense need by these children to act in hostile and violent ways. Gronlund concluded that there were some deep-seated developmental issues the children were trying to work out.

Carlsson-Paige and Levin (cited by Gronlund, 1992) also noticed that aggressive play may come from developmental needs. They stated that teachers see more aggressive and hard-to-manage behavior in the classroom because children are not adequately working out their developmental needs in other, more acceptable, ways. More obsessive involvement in war-play imitation and less effective play was

constructed by children to create meaning. Militaristic behavior, in and out of war-play, was noted because the concepts learned were mirrors of outside influences.

Gronlund was interested in what effect childrens' language might have on aggressive play. The researcher noted that the children had a play language all their own, so one research strategy included watching cartoons that the students were interested in to learn the language of the characters. Gronlund then interviewed the children during play time to record the childrens' answers about this type of play. The author used the lingo of student play to guide the children away from actions that were leading to out-of-control behaviors. A second strategy used, began with writing stories during writing time followed by play time. The stories had a rich, imaginative aspect that Gronlund felt had been missing from previous student play. Once the children had written the stories, dramatic play was influenced by what had been written, and the students began to combine more characters from various stories.

In the third strategy, Gronlund realized that fairy tales and other children's literature explored themes of violence and aggression through story context. Stories, concluded the author, provided an outlet and a safe place for children to construct their own understanding of issues of aggression and scary situations. Gronlund stated that Carlsson-Paige and Levin, Paley, and Howarth,

recommended using fairy tales and thematic units about scary things as ways to explore issues of violence, aggression, fear, and hostility. Even more so, the stories provided an alternative to mimicking of TV shows and movies. In summary, Gronlund advocated that teachers use a variety of strategies regarding superhero play and aggression in the classroom. Gronlund suggested that teachers and parents become familiar with the media to which children are exposed, let their children educate them, and learn the childrens' lingo that would lead them to more creative and less aggressive play. Grunlund also suggested teachers and parents explore themes of violence and aggression through the use of classic fairy tales and other children's literature to help the child gain an understanding of aggressive situations. Gronlund also recommended that adults create a safe place in the classroom and at home for children to explore the issues of aggression, and that the adults communicate their acceptance of and willingness to help in this process.

A teacher from Charlotteville Virginia observed aggression against peers during play that researchers Carlsson-Paige and Levin (1992) attributed to the desensitization of children to violence caused by the media. When a child was constantly exposed to the idea that violence is an acceptable and effective method of solving problems, and observed models (people) who use physical force in this manner, the child often displayed this learned behavior with others. Children

develop an understanding of conflict and how to resolve it through a long, slow process of construction according Kohlberg and Lickona, (cited by Carlsson-Paige and Levin). Younger children use what they see in their lives as a basis for constructing an understanding of how people treat each other. New learnings continue to build on earlier ideas through a dynamic process in which increasingly sophisticated ways of dealing with conflict develop.

The approaches commonly used to stop aggressive behavior caused too much additional conflict among children, suggested Carlsson-Paige and Levin (1992). The approaches would usually stop the conflict at least temporarily, but dealt with the immediate situation only. An approach was needed that not only solved the problem, but aided the children with the long-term tasks of changing skills gradually in order to help the children resolve conflict in absolute ways on their own. The approach Carlsson-Paige and Levin created, grew out of social psychology and were used with adults. Since such skills required cognitive skills typical of older children and adults, the writers used a different approach, adapting it to the developmental abilities of the younger child. This approach taught the elements of constructive conflict. When adapted to the classroom situation, the teacher helped the children involved in the conflict to see the problem as a shared one, helped the child to find a solution that pleased both of the children (a win: win solution), and to see that the negotiation

involved give and take. The instructor then helped the children see how to translate the solution (of sharing) into concrete actions. The children finally tried out their solution and reflected about how it worked. The teacher had to realize that younger children must experiment with the skills they learned in order to be able to take charge of the process. The researchers helped the children develop the skills needed to resolve their own conflicts by shaping the childrens' capability to solve problems in the social realm.

In creating the classroom context for learning conflict resolution skills, Carlsson-Paige and Levin specified that the skills must be practiced in a wide range of contexts if they were to be meaningfully learned. The child had to be immersed in a cooperative environment in which the student had opportunities for social encounters that fostered cooperation and sharing rather than individualism and competition. A discussion time was used in which children shared with others the approaches they tried in getting along together. The children discussed what they thought worked and why the approaches worked. Successful techniques were listed and referred to often. Another strategy for practice was reading books with conflict themes to elicit children's ideas about how the conflicts might be resolved. The children also made their own books about the disputes and how to solve them within their developmental capabilities. In addition, they acted out the stories in dramatic play. The students were shown

pictures of conflict situations and then asked questions to encourage discussions. The authors found that the children benefited greatly from hearing each others' ideas and those of the teacher to try to resolve conflicts among themselves. Problem puppets were introduced to the children, and were used in role-playing conflicts. The puppets had disputes like that of the children and the children offered ideas about how the problem might be solved. The range of conflict resolution skills was modeled and used in dramatic play as well as in developmental expression and writing. Defining the problem, negotiating, and finding a win: win solution were used as a reinforcement in varied ways to produce the ability to model positive behaviors consistently.

Cooperation with adults and peers in group care situations does not come naturally. Respect for others must be modeled and taught stated Honig (1985) in a review of the influence of preschool programs on young children. Care givers must teach cooperation and conflict resolution without aggression. Only when children can use reflection, thinking strategies, and contingency rules, can they develop appropriate, adaptive control of their own behaviors in line with adult expectations. The establishment of inner controls is a long developmental process, and young children need all of the help they can get from adults, Honig reported. Some ideas Honig suggested for enabling adults to foster reliable relationships, involved catching

children being good and expressing their pleasure at good relationship behaviors, as well as modeling considerate, patient, courteous, and helpful qualities. Honig stated that the adult must clearly convey to children that hurting others is not acceptable, although having and expressing angry feelings with words is acceptable.

Another idea reported by Honig, was for children to be put in a group circle in order for them to share their feelings. Children must be encouraged to think of alternatives to unacceptable behavior, reported Shure and Spivak (cited by Honig, 1985), and should be encouraged to think of the consequences of their inappropriate behaviors. Honig claimed that with such an array of discipline techniques, hurtful or distressed behaviors may be prevented, and children could then learn better ways to get along with others.

Hartup and Cotes (cited by Kemple, 1991) and Honig, all suggested that teachers organize special play sessions, and group children who are lacking in social skills with children who are socially competent. This would provide the less skilled child with someone from whom the child may learn effective skills. Furman, Rahe, and Hartup (cited by Kemple, 1991) demonstrated that socially isolated preschoolers who were exposed to play sessions with pairs of younger children eventually became more socially involved in the classroom than isolated children who were exposed to play sessions with children of their own age. Kemple also referred to the use of planned activities

in the classroom to help children form optional solutions to difficult social situations. Such activities might include the use of skits, puppet activities, and group discussions in which the children would be presented with conceptual social situations and encouraged to design a variety of solutions. The evidence suggested that children would then have the capacity to increase the number of appropriate strategies available to them and effectively use the newly learned solutions in the classroom.

Honig and Wittmer (1991) favored cooperation rather than competition in school plans, and the arrangement of the classroom spaces and play materials that facilitated cooperative play. Finkelstein (cited by Honig and Wittmer), reported that children who had attended a high quality child care program that emphasized cognitive development were more aggressive when they entered kindergarten than a control group of children who had not been in child care or who had attended community child care. When a prosocial curriculum was instituted in the child care program, this difference disappeared in later evaluations. Of utmost importance, according to Honig and Wittmer, was to cherish the children and create an atmosphere of affirmation of each individual child through community, family, and classroom rituals. More communities are calling for their public schools to play a more active role in shaping students' sense of morality according to Kirschenbaum (cited by Willis, 1994).

Kirschenbaum stated that there was a need for schools to guide students in the process of becoming moral adults, and reported there was widespread agreement that schools teach "core" values that incorporate equality, tolerance, justice, and the moral values essentially all Americans share (honesty, respect for others, and fairness). Kirschenbaum said the most direct method of transmitting values is inculcation, a method educators are rediscovering today. Inculcation is the process of making an impression on the mind of the student by using frequent repetition. These values may also be instilled in other ways such as using literature to provide good examples for values. Literature, such as Horatio Alger stories, moved the student by the simple morality of the tales. American history was also utilized to approach respect, tolerance, courage, fair play, and faith in the future. Both Kirschenbaum, Honig (1991), and Wittmer agreed that by modeling values, teachers can share their moral convictions and meet the child's need for adult models. Teachers must give students the opportunities to respond to moral issues themselves, to help build their own commitment, and to learn to make moral choices. Skills taught to the children to help them act morally included: how to listen; how to communicate clearly; how to stand up for their own beliefs; how to resolve problems in a nonviolent way; and how to resist peer pressure and maintain their self-respect. In conclusion, Kirschenbaum cautioned educators to teach values in

conjunction with parents and the larger community for very best results.

Mikulas, Coffman, Dayton, Frayne, and Maier, (1985) utilized behavior modification techniques based on literature to ease the fear of the dark in children ages four to seven. Incorporating modeling through characters in a book and using games as a follow-up, the researchers tried to overcome children's fears using bibliotherapy. Bibliotherapy involved reading a story or having the story read to a child for the purpose of soothing a psychological problem. They reported that there appeared to be great potential for using behavioral principles in children's stories and games. In many instances, it could be a very efficient and cost-effective approach with minimal risk. It might also catch behavioral problems earlier, when they are easier to treat, and it might help in the prevention of some problems. The problem might decrease without formal treatment; reducing or eliminating it early could diminish other problems that might arise.

Humor plays an important role in alleviating stress and supporting children's emotional, social, and cognitive development, Klein (1992) reported. Klein suggested children's literature as a format for humor. Through illustrations and amusing tales, humorous storybooks give children a dual message: life is not so complicated and learning is fun. Humor theorists, early childhood specialists, and psychologists Honig, Martin, and McGhee, (cited by Klein), suggested

that humor plays an important role in fostering childrens' development. Humor was found to help children cope with stress by playfully distorting or exaggerating reality. In the context of humor, children discovered the absurdity of situations that were normally stressful and viewed them in nonthreatening and positive ways when they read conflict situations presented in a humorous story. Children were relieved to see storybook characters resolve difficult problems in amusing but constructive ways. Humor was a coping mechanism that helped alleviate distress and supported childrens' control over their anxiety when fearful situations were given new meanings in the context of humor. Humor was a cognitive process that allowed children to verify recently acquired knowledge, and when children understood how social or language rules were violated in humor, they experienced a feeling of ability and mastery. Jalonge, Sutherland, and Arbuthnot (cited by Klein) related that storybook humor promoted learning and supported childrens' social and emotional development. Storybooks help young children experience a sense of power over events in their daily lives, as well as aid them in the experiences they find challenging.

Ventis (1989) reported that although humorous books and cartoons have rarely been put to use in therapeutic procedures with children, the author successfully treated a boy and his sister who were dog phobic by giving the children a book of dog jokes and cartoons.

The intent was to encourage the children to view dogs in ways other than fear and to foster the formation of a comfortable relationship between them and dogs. The children enjoyed the task and the outcome was successful. Games and stories have also begun to appear in child therapy treatment through the use of stories that are designed to accomplish specific goals in a humorous or playful context. The therapist can reach the children better with the use of such humorous literature. Ventis concluded that another area where more extensive application of humor could be profitable would be in social skills training with children.

Solution Strategy

The writer decided to use bibliotherapy as suggested by Willis (1994) and Klein (1992). In using bibliotherapy as an intervention for the modification of behaviors, the children can be helped to view the world and understand its problems in the safe haven of a book. In using this method of intervention, children will have a creative, enticing way in which to internalize positive choices for the future. The use of literature was also recommended by Honig and Wittmer (1991), and Willis (1994). Since humor appeared to play a meaningful role in soothing stress and supporting childrens' emotional, social, and cognitive development, according to Klein (1992), the writer planned to incorporate humor into books created by the writer. The writer's first intention was to foster the childrens' development in managing

stress by playfully distorting or exaggerating reality. The second intention was to facilitate creative thinking by using humor. Because humor is based on incongruity, the child must understand how events differ from reality to value humorous situations. The third intention was to motivate the child's thinking to produce positive exchanges in regard to behavior. It was the writer's intention to titillate, encourage, and stimulate the child to think of ideal choices in behavior by the incorporation of behavior modification principles as suggested by Mikulas, Coffman, Dayton, Frayne, and Maier (1985), Klein (1992); and Ventis (1989).

To modify the behaviors of poor listening skills, the writer planned to use Truesdale's (1990) whole body behaviors to give children active behaviors using the tangible parts of the body to make listening a concrete, observable skill. The whole body behaviors were to be incorporated into the context of a book. Discussions in identifying negative examples of listening behaviors, as recommended by Truesdale, were to be used to help students internalize and recognize negative and positive behaviors in the form of character picture cards.

Aggressive behaviors were to be addressed by creating a book giving children the model created by Carlsson-Paige and Levin (1992) of the elements of constructive conflict resolution. To help the child experiment with the skills, story character problem puppets were to be

used to role play conflicts using the conflict resolution skills modeled in the book. Discussion cards were to help the children by hearing each other's ideas as well as those of the teacher to try to resolve conflicts.

The characters in the book about getting along with others, were to model considerate, patient, courteous, and helpful qualities as suggested by Honig (1985). Since cooperation with others does not come naturally, respect for others was to be modeled and taught through the characters in the stories. The children were to learn alternatives to unacceptable behavior, and learn enhanced ways to get along with others. The adult characters were to convey to children clearly, as exemplified by Honig, that hurting others is not acceptable through the story context.

Chapter III
Method

The method of implementing the practicum included the production of three author-created behavioral books and grade level appropriate follow-up activities. The project provided much-needed practice of positive choices in actions and social skills of the kindergarten aged child.

During week one of the process, the author wrote the first draft of a book about improving listening skills in the kindergarten student. The book utilized the model of "whole body" listening founded by Truesdale. In the book, the author used jungle animals as examples to present different ways to listen. The animals in the story titled "Miss Longfellow's Listeners" demonstrated animals who learned about listening skills by their teacher, who was forced to teach the jungle kids how to listen as a result of the animal's dangerous lack of attention. Following the writing of each book, a teacher editorial team, made up of six members, made revisions, proofread, added to the text, and offered constructive input into each story draft.

During week two of the implementation process, the writer initiated the draft of the book for correcting the behavior of aggression. The context of the edition concerning aggressive behavior,

called " Super Stone Kid" provided the five elements of constructive conflict: (1) to make the children involved in the conflict see the problem as a shared one; (2) to help the child find a solution that pleases both of the children (a win/win solution); (3) to see that the negotiation involves give and take; (4) to help the children see how to translate a solution of sharing into concrete actions; and (5) to try out their solution and think about how it works.

During week three of the process, the writer created a book about getting along with others, titled "Letters to My Friends." The story character was a kindergarten child who had difficulty in making friends and getting along with children in the classroom. The character wrote letters to the nursery rhyme characters having similar difficulties to ask for assistance. The nursery characters provided kind, caring assistance and modeled positive behaviors for the child in need. Drafts were sent to the editorial team.

During week four, the writer made revisions based on the suggestions from the editorial team on the book about getting along with others. The book text and illustrations were then copied for use by the members of the editorial team during the project implementation. The literature criteria evaluation form created during week one was revised by the writer to be used with each unit to evaluate the success of each individual book.

During week five, the writer produced follow-up activities for the book on listening. The activities were constructed to enhance the

presentation of the behavioral concepts and give much needed help in practicing the skill for the future. The first activity involved using "listener" and "non-listener" picture cards of the story characters to entice student discussions about choices. The students had to identify the child as a listener or non-listener, and had to be able to tell why they thought the child was listening, and which body parts the child used to listen. The second activity created was a listening tape of sounds with matching picture cards. The child had to identify the sound, as well as distinguish the listening body part that was being used when listening to each sound. The author then drafted a plan on how to use the book and activities (Appendix C :47) during the weeks of implementation in the editorial team's classrooms. The plan, book activities, and the matching behavioral book were sent to the editorial team during week eight of the implementation process. At this point in the process, the project had been monitored by the editorial team members, and the writer's advisors, through the book drafts sent to them.

During week six, the writer created the follow-up activities for the book on aggressive behaviors. The first activity was a set of discussion cards entitled "What would you do if..." using the story characters and a teacher's oral text on the back of the picture cards. Through the process of class discussion, the children were to share with others the approaches they tried in getting along together. The children were also to discuss what they thought would work in

aggressive situations, and why the approach worked. The second activity used jungle puppets made of felt for the conflict resolution skills given in the book. The puppets were used in specified role playing conflicts, and the children offered ideas about how the problem should be solved. The author also created a plan of how the book and activities were to be used (Appendix D :49) and prepared the materials for distribution to the editorial team at the appropriate time.

During week seven, the writer completed the follow-up activities for the book about getting along with others. The first activity was a fine motor skill center for lacing figures from the nursery rhymes in a book made of poster board with yarn string for lacing. The center was completed in cooperative groups of two, pairing a shy child with a child who had high self esteem and the ability to form friendships easily. The second activity used a set of discussion cards about friendships and cooperating with others. The child had to tell what they would do in a particular situation. This activity was to give the students much needed discussion and social interactions with other children about what they did in a successful situation. The final activity used problem sock-puppets for dramatic social play. The puppets and social situation cards were used as a center within the classroom and also as reinforcement of the proper process for situations that occurred within the classroom. The author then combined the activities, book, and weekly plan (Appendix E :51) and sent them to the peer editorial team during week eight of

implementation. A copy of the Literature Evaluation Form (Appendix F: 53) was also sent.

During week eight the writer contacted the members of the editorial team, and sent the materials to the prospective teachers of sites A, B, and C. The writer also completed the evaluation forms for the three behavioral areas.

During week nine of the implementation process, the writer contacted the editorial team to discuss the evaluation process. The writer also answered questions the editorial team had concerning the literature implementation.

During week 10, the editorial team began a pilot test of the first behavioral book about listening, and used the activities as they saw fit, according to the social and developmental abilities of the students in their individual classrooms. On day one, the teachers read the behavioral book *Miss Longfellow's Listeners* to the students. The teachers presented a follow-up activity using a poster of the listening parts, and reviewed each part. On day two, the editorial team read the story again, and used the listening parts poster to review the listening parts. On day three, the students told the story in sequence and reviewed the listening and non-listening behaviors using the listening and non-listening character cards. The students and were able to tell if the character was using the listening parts and were also capable of telling what listening parts were being used. By this time in the process, the writer's target group related listening to the listening parts,

and the writer was able to see changes in the behaviors of the children. On day four, the target groups retold the story and reviewed the listening parts using the poster provided. The writer was able to make the target group of students ready for other activities requiring listening by simply pointing to the poster and reviewing the listening parts. On day five of the week, the students reviewed the main idea of the book, and used the listener and non-listener cards and the listening tape. At the end of the week, the editorial team also evaluated the success of the behavioral unit using the literature criteria checklist and returned the evaluation to the writer.

During week 11, the evaluation tools were sent for the other two behavioral areas to the members of the editorial team at sites A, B, and C. The members of the editorial team implemented the book on aggressive behaviors with the students in their classrooms, following the plan that the writer created or adapted the plan to suit the needs of the students in the classroom. On day one of the week, the teachers read the behavioral book *Super Stone Kid* to the students. The team then discussed the aspects of conflict resolution given in the book with the students. On day two, the team members re-read the book and followed the reading by using the "What would you do if..." behavioral cards. Through the discussion cards, the children shared the approaches in getting along with others that had worked for them. On day three, the students retold the story. Jungle puppets were then used to review the aspects of constructive conflict resolution. The

children in the writer's class were able to use these elements through the use of puppets. During day four, the students re-told the story and followed the discussion by using the puppets to create their own conflict situations. On day five, the students re-read the story with the writer, and reviewed the main idea of the story, and the elements of constructive conflict resolution. By this time, the writer noted two situations on the playground in which the children were able to follow through with using the concepts given in the book to solve the aggressive problems that occurred. The writer and the editorial team evaluated the success of the unit on day five.

During week 12, the editorial team implemented the third behavioral text on getting along with others following the plans created previously by the writer. On day one, the team members read the behavioral text *Letters To My Friends* to the students. A discussion followed about the actions taken to make the character get along with other children in the classroom. On day two, the teachers reread the story and used the character discussion cards provided to reinforce the correct behaviors in dealing with positive relations with others. On the third day, the children re-told the story, using sock puppets to act out social situations in which the character learned to get along with others. During day four, the teachers read the story again, reinforcing the ways given in the book to help the students deal with the situations in appropriate ways. The actions the story characters suggested to give the character positive social relationships were reviewed and stressed.

The students then discussed the character discussion cards with the teachers. The writer noted positive choices were made by all members of the classroom in relation to the situations discussed. On day five, the teachers read the story and used either the sock puppets, or discussion cards as a follow-up to the story. The members of the editorial team evaluated the literature unit and returned the evaluations to the author. During this week, the members of the editorial team also evaluated the three behaviors using specially developed measurement tools for each behavioral area (Appendices G :55; H :57; I :59). These evaluations were also sent to the writer at the end of week 12.

Chapter IV

Results

The evaluation of the practicum included four objectives that covered the areas of kindergarten behavioral concern.

Objective number one stated that after 12 weeks, the writer would have developed three kindergarten literature-based behavioral teaching units as evidenced by the target group of teachers checking 100% of the components on a checklist of teaching and literature components. During week one of the implementation process, the writer and the teachers developed a checklist of literature components applicable to each unit based on what the editorial team proposed as a an effective literature-based unit. During week two of implementation, the criterion was revised by the members of the editorial team, and returned to the writer. The teachers established the effectiveness by checking the components on the checklist (Appendix J :61). The first behavioral teaching unit, listening skills, was rated at 100% by five out of the six with an average score of 96 %. The listening literature-based unit was not successful, but the findings did show close results to the intended goal. One editorial team member said that the story did not hold the interest of the students and could not be retold by

the children. The writer feels that this was due to the makeup of that classroom since the classroom in question contained very young children, who had an abundance of behavioral difficulties. The literature-based unit to correct difficulties in aggressive behaviors was scored 100% by all the editorial team members (Appendix K :63). Getting along with others, the third behavioral unit, received an average score of 98% of the components checked (Appendix L :65). The problem was that one editorial team member's class could not retell the story easily. This was the same group that had difficulty with the first unit. In summary, the teachers' average score for the three stories was 96, 100, and 98% respectively. Since the criterion established for objective number one was 100%, the objective was not successfully completed.

Objective number two stated that after participation in a three-week literature program, the targeted group of kindergarten students would demonstrate 10 percent more positive behavior in listening and listening skills as evidenced by a teacher observation tool The observation tool used to tabulate these results (Appendix M: 67) had eight statements for teacher response. Response to the statements involved a two-point rating scale (yes or no) and the teachers were asked to rate students before implementation (B) and after implementation (A). The average percent of mastery of listening skills before the use of the literature unit was 18%, and the mastery of skills at the end of the unit was 100%. The data collected from

the listening observation tool (Appendix M :67) produced an increase of 82% more positive behaviors in the kindergarten students, therefore, objective number two was successfully met.

Objective number three said that after three weeks of participation in a behavioral literature program, the targeted kindergarten students would decrease aggressive behaviors by 10 percent as validated by an editorial team survey. During weeks eight and nine of the implementation process, the educators on the editorial team revised the survey. The aggressive behaviors evaluation survey (Appendix N :69) used a four-point rating scale that included: poor, fair, good, and excellent, to show student mastery of concepts. Before implementation of the unit, the target group of students could master 45% of the concepts in constructive actions to aggressive situations. After the behavioral book and activities were used, the percent of mastery of behavioral concepts was 85%. The total decrease in aggressive behaviors was 40%, exceeding the intended 10% decrease in negative behaviors. Because of this decrease in aggressive behaviors, objective number three was successful.

Objective number four indicated that after three weeks of implementing a literature-based behavioral modification project, the target group of kindergarten students would generate 10 percent more positive behaviors in getting along with others as measured by a writer-made rating scale entitled Getting Along With Others (Appendix O :71). The scale was developed by the writer and modified by the

editorial team during weeks eight and nine of the weeks eight and nine of the implementation process. The teacher-made rating scale asked the members of the editorial team to list the number of occurrences of behaviors displayed by the target group of children before and after the use of the behavioral unit about getting along with others. Data from the scale (Appendix O :71), indicated the average percent of occurrence of positive behavior displayed before the use of the behavioral unit was 53%. Following the introduction and use of the book and follow up activities, the average percent of occurrence of positive behavior displayed by the target group of kindergarten students was 77%. Objective number four was successful, as the results revealed a 24% increase in positive behaviors in the area of getting along with others.

Chapter V

Recommendations

The writer shared the results and materials of the practicum project with the administrators and peer educators at the target sites through the members of the editorial team. The educators felt the project was creative and innovative. The writer and members of the editorial team encouraged other educators to use the strategies that were useful in modifying the problems of listening, aggressive behaviors, and getting along with others within the classroom. Several educators, other than those involved in the project, have used the books to help with the problems mentioned. The books and activities will remain a resource for kindergarten and first-grade teachers. The writer has also contacted editorial agencies to see if they might be interested in publishing the books and materials.

The results have been discussed with the writer's administrators, and the materials are accessible to the staff of the writer's teaching site. In addition, the writer is contacting the district's early childhood supervisor to share the results and materials of the practicum project.

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